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NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

1st City Bldg., 1612 K Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20005

CONTACT: Raymond Benenroff, 628-3440

OMAHA, Neb., July 24---Recent racial riots in Newark and other communities should not be blamed on the anti-poverty program, the president of the 14,300-member National League of Cities said today.

In an address prepared for delivery here to state legislators and other officials from 13 midwestern states, Mayor Harold H. Tollefson of Tacoma, Wash., praised the poverty program as having actually been responsible for preventing violence in city after city.

"We are disturbed at recent charges that the anti-poverty program has been responsible for stirring up unrest," Tollefson said. "The anti-poverty program in city after city has been responsible for just the opposite of that."

Governors, state legislators and other officials are meeting in Omaha at the midwestern conference of the Council of State Governments.

Mayor Tollefson's complete statement follows:

"Recent outbreaks of violence in Newark, Plainfield, Cairo, Tampa, Dayton and other communities have shocked and confused all Americans. Senseless destruction of stores and homes do not help solve the deep, difficult problems of decades. It is not enough to condemn violence, however. It is important that we try to understand the causes of violence and then proceed to do something about it.

We must avoid the temptation to look for simple explanations or scapegoats for racial unrest and violence. We are disturbed at recent charges, for example, that

the anti-poverty program has been responsible for stirring up unrest. The anti-poverty program in city after city has been responsible for just the opposite of that. It has attacked some of the most basic social ills in the community which breed impatience and antagonism. It has provided the vehicle for the peaceful expression of this impatience. And in city after city, persons associated with the poverty program have actually made important contributions to preventing or minimizing disturbance which has threatened.

"It would be the most self-defeating action imaginable if we were now to blame and even punish the program which holds out much promise for the ultimate solution of the very problems which lead to unrest and violence."

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